

Madam chair and Members of the Committee, for the record, my name is Greg Holmlund spelled H-O-L-M-L-U-N-D. Thank you Representative Wagoner for sponsoring this bill.

I am proud of my community of East Helena and what it does for our children.

Last year my daughter earned a Presidential Award in Education – along with 30 other fifth graders in a class of 122. She is a bright kid, but what has helped her reach her goals are the teachers and administrators in the East Helena School District.

In 2007, Radley was one of only two elementary schools in the State of Montana to be awarded the National honor of Blue Ribbon School status for demonstrating dramatic gains in student achievement.

In 2010, Radley was recognized for increasing Math and Reading scores for American Indian and economically disadvantaged students and named a National Title 1 Distinguished School.

In 2011, the East Helena School Board was commended for creating a unified effort to serve each child in the district while blending the unique individualism that the members bring in service to their community and received an Outstanding School Board in Montana Award.

Also in 2011, Eastgate and Radley were forward thinking in their approach to the national issue of bullying by implementing the OLWEUS bully prevention program. The goal of this program is to change the culture of the East Helena Public Schools, as well as the community. It promotes anti-bullying rules among the children, community support by having “safe-zones” with local businesses, and parental involvement.

Over the years, numerous teachers have been recognized – Staci Dawes was voted 2007 MT AHPED Middle School Teacher of the year, Rachel Bright, a third grade teacher, was named 2008 Montana Star Teacher of the year, Peggy Chappius was named 2008 Physical Education Teacher of the year by the Montana Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, Rhonda Burnet received the 2012 State Citizenship Education Teacher Award from the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Ron Whitmoyer, the superintendent, received recognition in 2012 by the School Administrators of Montana and was awarded the G.V. Erickson Award for his contributions to improving education in Montana, and most recently, Joe McMahon, principal of Radley Elementary, received recognition and was named the state’s 2013 National Distinguished Principal. And that is just a few of the awards and recognitions the teachers and administrators of the East Helena School District have received – it’s amazing – they are amazing.

What has helped our children reach their goals are the teachers and administrators in the District, along with the consistent environment of having the same classmates. These teachers truly get to know their students and their families which breeds a stronger sense of community. It is my belief, and that of others who you will hear from today, that a high school in our district would receive the same praises because the dedication and commitment of our teachers and administrators would continue through the 12th grade.

These are the reasons we are proud of East Helena, our district, and most importantly, our kids. They are what matters and expanding our already great School District is what is right for them.

Thank you Madam chair and members of the committee for your time. And again, thank you to Representative Wagoner for sponsoring this bill.